

Building the promised land: the Church of Scotland's church extension movement, 1944-61  
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## **Building the Promised Land: The Church of Scotland's Church Extension Movement, 1944-1961**

### **Abstract**

The main theme of this article is the interaction between secular and spiritual reconstruction in the post-war decades. During this period, Scotland witnessed a massive public housing construction drive, resulting in large-scale population movement. The Church of Scotland viewed this as both a challenge to its role as a national church and as an opportunity for church renewal. Part of a much larger religious boom in Western Europe and North America, the Church Extension movement in this case initially displayed energy and imagination in launching a parallel programme of church building in the New Towns and housing estates. Four million pounds were raised through voluntary effort, with aim of placing the Church at the centre of community building in the new housing areas. Yet, by the late 1950s the movement had begun to falter in terms of confidence and momentum. To some extent, this reflected the material and psychological legacy of dominant territorial church, including its continuing attachment to the historic narrative of working-class irreligion. Indeed, the mobilisation of the traditional congregational mainstream behind the dynamism of Church Extension proved persistently problematic. Ultimately, however, the ambitions of Church Extension were frustrated by the growing threats posed by rising affluence and youth disenchantment, which would also fuel the general crisis of institutional religion in the next decade.

**Keywords:** Scotland; religion; reconstruction; housing; secularisation.

During the two decades following the Second World War, the Church of Scotland was forced to confront one of the most dramatic, visible and concentrated challenges in its existence. Reflecting the enormous scale of Scotland's housing deficit, this took the form of a massive population migration, with almost one and a half million people relocated from crowded inner-city areas to New Towns and housing estates. The Church's response not only required the development of new operational and managerial structures for building and fundraising, but also forced it to reassess its own history and spiritual values in an attempt to mobilise congregations behind its task. Determined that 're-churching' should parallel re-housing, by the early 1960s it had succeeded in completing 150 major building projects, representing an investment of £4 million pounds.<sup>1</sup>

Examining the dynamics and significance of this vigorous construction drive, the discussion which follows is ostensibly a specific case study of organised religion confronting change at an immediate, local level. The work of the Church of Scotland's National Church Extension Committee, for example, clearly illustrates the powerful legacy of the built environment and the burdens of physical plant maintenance faced by institutional religion. However, the evolution of the movement also highlights the broader interplay of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Church Extension Chimes*, No. 6, 1963.

environmental and cultural dimensions of belief, belonging and identity. 'Environmental' in this case includes the effects of war, demography and housing policy – while the 'cultural' captures the power of historic narratives and discourses, such as the ideal Christian community, in shaping collective behaviours and identities.

Even more importantly, Church Extension in Scotland underlines the complexity and contingency of institutional religion's engagement with modern secular society. Far from being a torpid and stable decade in terms of religious history, the 1950s were characterised by an uncertain dynamism – as Wuthenow expresses it, 'a vision of promise and peril'.<sup>2</sup> In this national movement the forces of experimentation and institutional inertia were displayed in sharp relief. While religious decline has been viewed as representing the inevitable and uncontested product of a broader eclipse of communal forms of activity, Church Extension can be interpreted as an active attempt at reinvigorating both the corporate nature of the Church itself, as well as combating the destructive atomism that its leaders viewed as characteristic of modernity. Whether, however, an investment in bricks and mortar would be sufficient to buttress the Church's traditional standing in national life would remain an open question throughout the movement's existence. The Church in post-war Scotland was a dominant national church 'embedded' in its traditional geographical territory, at a point when circumstances demanded a 'missionary' church, flexible, mobile and responsive to the opportunities of urban growth. The dilemma for its

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<sup>2</sup> R. Wuthenow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, 1988), 89.

proponents was whether traditional structures and mentalities centred on the territorial parish had sufficient flexibility to harness the energies unleashed by the new evangelical expansionism.<sup>3</sup>

The significance accorded to Scottish Church Extension by contemporaries has not been reflected in the current historiography. Its omission from the most recent surveys of post-war Britain is hardly surprising, as these allow little space for religion generally in their accounts of everyday social life.<sup>4</sup> Specialist architectural histories of the period might have been expected to offer greater coverage, but even here the Church of Scotland's building programme has suffered in comparison to its Roman Catholic counterpart, whose imaginative commissions from the 1950s onwards placed it on an international stage.<sup>5</sup> One of the few studies to address the movement directly is Wood's questionnaire-based survey of Church of Scotland Church Extension ministers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> G. Davie, 'Thinking broadly and thinking deeply: two examples of the study of religion in the modern world', in C. Brown and M. Snape (eds), *Secularisation in the Christian World* (Farnham, 2010), 230.

<sup>4</sup> D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-51* (London, 2007); D. Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (2005); P. Hennessey, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (2006).

<sup>5</sup> Historic Scotland, *Scotland: Building for the Future. Essays on the Architecture of the Post-war Era* (Edinburgh, 2009), 61-70; J. Rodger (ed.), *Gillespie, Kidd and Coia. Architecture 1957-87*, (Glasgow, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> S. Wood, 'Leadership profiles of Church Extension Ministers in the Church of Scotland, 1945-65', PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1996.

Approaching its subject from a theological perspective, this contains much valuable raw material on clerical experiences at parish level, but its focus is on leadership profiles and personal approaches to ministry and evangelism, rather than on the movement's impact and broader context. Church Extension does claim its place in broader historical treatments of religion in Scotland and the UK, but here commentators have on occasion found it difficult to separate analysis post-war extension efforts from the eventual rapid decline in church connection. Indeed, for Brown, it was the relative 'sluggishness' of the Church's official response during the 1940s and 50s that actively contributed to dramatic membership reversals of succeeding decades, as re-housing destroyed the community networks that had previously supported congregations.<sup>7</sup>

Against this background, it is vital to locate the Scottish experience in its international context. Here too, focussed studies are lacking, with historians preferring to integrate the various international manifestations of church extension within accounts of the post-war religious boom and its eventual downturn. From this literature emerges a broadly similar pattern of ecclesiastical building across North America, Australia and Western Europe, fuelled by economic recovery, population movement and religious revival. In each case, however, the precise scale and contours remain distinct, drawing on contrasting levels of confidence and purpose on the part of the churches, as well as reflecting the various national trajectories of secular modernisation. In the USA,

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<sup>7</sup> C. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), 164; *Religion and Twentieth Century Britain*, (London, 2006), 180.

for example, commentators identify mass suburbanisation, as the key driver of ecclesiastical expansion, with churches becoming social and worship centres for affluent new residential areas and relocated urban communities. All of the mainstream churches, but particularly the smaller, free-standing denominations participated energetically, with the model of the self-funding congregation proving ideally suited to the demands of rapid growth. Between 1946 and 1949, the Southern Baptist Convention alone established 500 new churches at a cost of \$97 million, with a further billion worth of construction estimated underway across the Protestant denominations.<sup>8</sup> In Australia too growth was impressive if less vigorous, in this case fuelled by overseas immigration, as well as by sprawling owner-occupied urban expansion. Here competing denominational building programmes proceeded with greater success in middle-class estates than in the outer industrial suburbs.<sup>9</sup>

While rejecting the simple dichotomy of a 'religious' America and 'secular' Europe, the post-war conditions for church extension were rather different in the European case. On the continent, the aftermath of war and occupation had left congregational structures devastated, encouraging more radical solutions than mere 'church-planting'. Typical was the vision of a 'church

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<sup>8</sup> W. Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew. An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, 63; Wuthnow, *Restructuring*, 36; P. Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945. A History* (New York, 2003), 33-42.

<sup>9</sup> D. Hilliard, 'The religious culture of Australian cities in the 1950s', *Hispania Sacra*, vol. 42 (1990), 475.

without walls' popularised by the German pastor, Horst Symanowski. The challenge, he argued, was not to get 'modern man' to return to the traditional church of parish and pulpit, but for the church to, 'open itself to radical renewal through fresh encounter with the living Word in the midst of the secular world'.<sup>10</sup> War damage and population displacement also threatened traditional parochial structures in England, but here the response was more modest and conventional. In contrast to the growing self-confidence and expansionism of English Catholicism, there were already deep concerns within the Established Church that its linkage to the population as a whole was sharply contracting. In this case, as Chandler indicates, its centrally directed efforts at extension initially focused on 'restoration' rather than renewal, with construction gaining momentum fairly slowly.<sup>11</sup> By 1951, a total of £150,000 had been allocated by the Church Commissioners to thirty-nine new projects, although this commitment continued steadily, so that between 1954 and 1959 a further £3.2 million was distributed to the new estates, with an estimated nineteen new districts or parishes created annually since 1948. Nevertheless, the impression remained of a defensive national church clinging 'to its southern citadels while spreading itself thinner and thinner in areas in which its domination had always been very much in question'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> H. Symanowski, *The Christian Witness in an Industrial Society* (Philadelphia, 1964), 89.

<sup>11</sup> A. Chandler, *The Church of England in the Twentieth Century: The Church Commissioners and the Politics of Reform, 1948-1998* (Woodbridge, 2006), 104.

<sup>12</sup> A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985* (London, 1986), 437.



Where does the Church of Scotland stand in this continuum of ecclesiastical entrepreneurship? To address this question, it is important to begin by grasping the distinctive elements surrounding the secular landscape in the aftermath of the Second World War, as well as understanding how the national Church understood its mission in the new society. The discussion examines the two formative phases of post-war Church Extension. It begins with the years of its 'First Million' appeal (1944-54) when ambition overlapped with the frustrations of austerity; it then moves on to examine the drive for a 'Second Million', (1955-1960) which began with high hopes, but ended with an early intimation of the threats that institutional religion would face in the next decade. The research utilises the formal reports, publicity materials and ephemera generated by the National Church Extension Committee, while also drawing in depth on the movement's coverage in both the ecclesiastical and mainstream press – itself testament to the attention that the Church's activities could command in the post-war period.

### **The 'first million': 1944-1954**

Even before the end of the war, the sense of a 'new Scotland' waiting to be build had acquired a powerful currency, as successive Housing Acts from 1944 onwards prepared the ground an unprecedented drive for national

reconstruction.<sup>13</sup> The new pattern of economy and society which emerged in the decades after the Second World War was one whose central dynamic was state intervention, guided by social welfare ideals. Displaying an important degree of autonomy in terms of culture, policy and governance, the scale and legitimacy of state involvement in Scotland was given its clearest articulation in the consensus surrounding the need for a massive investment in public housing. The emphasis on high-volume construction, targeted at working-class families and underpinned by a system of subsidies and rent controls, was viewed as essential in addressing appalling conditions, especially evident in the Clydeside conurbation, where an estimated half a million new dwellings were identified as an immediate requirement in 1945. Built at a remarkable pace, the new public provision represented around 85 per cent of total house building activity - probably largest share of any advanced economy outside the Socialist bloc.<sup>14</sup> The first phase of growth during the decade after 1945 saw local authorities push ahead with the creation of large high density peripheral estates, although New Towns, such as East Kilbride (1947) and Glenrothes (1948) were also initiated with central government support, as centres for more balanced national and local economic development.

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<sup>13</sup> M. Glendinning, *Rebuilding Scotland. The Post-war Vision, 1945-75* (East Linton, 1997), xi-xiii; D. Cowling, *An Essay for Today. The Scottish New Towns 1947 to 1997* (Edinburgh, 1997), 3-11.

<sup>14</sup> A. Gibb, 'Policy and politics in Scottish housing since 1945', in R. Rodger (ed.), *Scottish Housing in the Twentieth Century* (Leicester, 1989), 164-6.

The Church of Scotland faced this latest adventure in public policy with a combination of hope and anxiety. A bitter recent memory, was its failure to engage with the social problems of the inter-war years and its over-identification with the forces of privilege and political conformity – indeed Church Extension activities during the 1930s had been one of the few examples of dynamism, raising over £200,000 despite the economic crisis for the completion of 47 churches and hall buildings.<sup>15</sup> During the early 1940s, however, the Church had increasingly edged towards the prevailing progressive consensus on issues of social and economic justice. A landmark was provided by the work of the General Assembly's 'Commission for the Interpretation of God's Will in the Present Crisis', which provided a considered restatement of the relationship between the church and the civil ordering of society, along with an enlarged agenda for the Church's corporate witness and social action.<sup>16</sup> Predicated on the confident assumption that Christianity was dynamic enough to benefit from engagement with the secular world, the immediate post-war period also saw a series of practical experiments at outreach activity, such as industrial chaplaincy and the innovative evangelism of the 'Tell Scotland' and 'Christian Commando' movements.<sup>17</sup> Together, these aimed not only at extending the boundaries of the

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<sup>15</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1954*, (Edinburgh, 1954), 233.

<sup>16</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1942* (Edinburgh, 1942), 'Report on the Commission on the Interpretation of God's Will in the Present Crisis', 572.

<sup>17</sup> EW McFarland and R. Johnston, 'Faith in the factory: the Church of Scotland's industrial mission, 1942-1958', *Historical Research*, 83 (2010), 539-64; J. Highet, *The Scottish*

national church, particularly among the urban working class, but also hoped to achieve a more general social and spiritual transformation of modern life, through illuminating the weaknesses of self-sufficient secular humanism.

The Church Extension movement, with its motto '*The Church in the Midst*', was part of this broader institutional dialogue with modernity - not least in terms of the grand scale envisaged for its activities. The new drive was formally launched in March 1944, with an appeal directed at the Church's national membership for the 'ingathering of one million' in order to meet the cost of new construction over the next decade. With an estimated two fifths of Scots on the move, it was estimated that least 105 new churches would be required for the new communities.<sup>18</sup> More than mere church building, however, the 'lively stones' laid down by each member viewed as essential regenerating the whole church, by forging a connection with the families, young people and children who would form the bulk of the new settlers. Indeed, for the National Church Extension Committee, this was the movement's defining feature:

It is a true saying. A living church is at its best when extending the boundaries of its service. It is doing its proper task. Its masonry is missionary. The new sanctuaries are to set forth the Gospel and the Person of Christ as

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*Churches: A Review of their State Four Hundred Years after the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1960), 86-9.

<sup>18</sup> *Scotsman*, 2 Mar 1944; *Reports to the General Assembly, 1945*, (Edinburgh, 1945), 210-1.

the remedy for society today and as the hope for the world tomorrow; Church Extension is Evangelism.<sup>19</sup>

Like other radical ministries of the period, it was characterised by an ability to assemble a coalition of social and theological positions in its support. Diversity of opinion on such questions was a notable characteristic of the Church of Scotland, and the ability to accommodate this would prove both an advantage and a source of tension for Church Extension. The movement's most powerful stimulus, for example, came from the Iona Community, founded by Rev George Macleod in 1938 as a bold corporatist experiment, aimed at re-christianising society through integrating the spiritual, physical and social life of human beings. For Macleod, it was imperative to address the cleavage between church and community that had opened up in an increasingly atomised and class-ridden urban industrial society.<sup>20</sup> His battle cry 'We shall rebuild' found practical expression in Church Extension, and those entering the Iona 'brotherhood' as part of their training for the ministry were encouraged to serve in tough Extension parishes before returning to more conventional church careers.

Adopting a more conventional evangelical perspective, Rev Tom Allen's, *The Face of My Parish* fuelled a similarly creative agenda for congregational renewal that fitted well with Church Extension activities. Allen offered a distinctive interpretation of secularisation, where instead of capitulating to the

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<sup>19</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1945*, 213.

<sup>20</sup> *The Coracle*, Oct 1938, 16-17.

modern world, the church itself had come to represent a particularly alien form of secular culture. Rejecting the division between personal evangelism and new experiments in Christian community building, his solution was lay empowerment, the creation of a 'church within the church'.<sup>21</sup> However, his image of the Church as enclosed community dominated by traditional behaviours and 'respectable conformity' also anticipated the difficulties of post evangelism assimilation within conventional framework of the Church's life.

As well as seeking to define the Church's modern mission, the movement also made powerful appeal to tradition and conformity, as signalled by the continuing leadership of the Very Rev Dr John White, a towering figure from the conservative wing of the Church and the personal inspiration for the Church Extension activities of the 1930s. In seeking legitimacy for their new enterprise its promoters stressed the 'Christian continuity' of outreach work. Enlarging the network of territorial parishes was thus presented as embodying the cherished Reformation principle of 'a church in every parish and Gospel ordinances for the whole population'. Tribute was similarly paid to the distinguished precedent of Rev Thomas Chalmers' Church Extension Scheme of the 1830s and 40s, which had aimed to provide church accommodation for the cities and new industrial areas.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> T. Allen, *The Face of My Parish* (London, 1954), 53-6.

<sup>22</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1954*, 232.

The Church Extension movement could also take heart from the present position of the Church of Scotland as well as its past. Structurally interwoven with Scottish society, and claiming to stand for values at the heart of the nation's life, it was precisely the aura of stability and permanence which surrounded it that would help it flourish in uncertainties of the post-war period. By 1946, the number of communicants had already risen by 175,000, heralding a further decade of growth. This permitted churchmen to boast that whereas the Church of England was a 'national' church on the basis of history and tradition, their Church was truly 'national' in terms of its share of the churchgoing population.<sup>23</sup> The centrality of the Church of Scotland's role as a national institution would also ensure that its strong denominational identity was carried over into the work of church building. While international commentators argued that doctrinal stumbling blocks had been sufficiently eroded to promote the creation of non-denominational community churches, an ecumenical pattern would not develop in Scotland until the mid 1960s, and only then in a very limited form.<sup>24</sup>

However, like many of the Church's initiatives in the post-war period, a hallmark of Church Extension was its tendency to interweave confidence with apprehension. In this instance, fears crystallised around the prospect of 'the bulk of the re-housed population slipping back into the church-avoiding attitudes so

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<sup>23</sup> P. Bisset, *The Church and Her Scotland. The Struggle for a Missionary Church* (Edinburgh, 1986), 1.

<sup>24</sup> R. Finke and R Start, *The Churching of America 1776-1990. The Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992), 224.

many of them had before'.<sup>25</sup> The language is significant. While in the USA, the oscillation between hope and fear that marked the post-war religious boom was fuelled by threats from a new environment, such as Communist aggression and nuclear annihilation, in Scotland it was the historical narrative of working class alienation and the perceived failure of the Church's previous evangelism that was decisive in producing a dystopian vision of how brave new world of mass public housing could equally become a godless one.<sup>26</sup> In the previous century, the construction of utilitarian housing for industrial workers was believed to have disrupted community life and church adherence, despite the efforts of Chalmers and his successors.<sup>27</sup> The discourse of working class irreligion would prove a persistent one, even in fresh settings of new towns and peripheral estates, paradoxically coexisting with hopes that new physical environment would encourage new spirituality. Alongside the new language of democracy and renewal, the urban 'unkirked' of previous generations were replaced by the spectre of 'spiritually underprivileged' dwellers the new 'churchless towns'; as a defence, the new churches would be act as 'beacons', 'spiritual and secular powerhouses' or 'lighthouses', their very presence raising 'the standards of civilisation in the new communities which have sprung up almost in a night'.<sup>28</sup> With traditional collective identities threatened by relocation, a concerned Church saw the opportunity of contributing to the building of new communities

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<sup>25</sup> Highet, *Scottish Churches*, 153.

<sup>26</sup> Herberg, *Protestant*, 74-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Life and Work*, Feb 1953.

<sup>28</sup> *Scotsman*, 4 Dec 1946; *Reports to the General Assembly, 1946*, (Edinburgh, 1946), 181.



by putting itself at their heart, but fears of a new working class exodus leant a note of desperation to its calls for action, with claims that the provision of church buildings should rank in priority second only to housing. There seemed everything to gain, but there was so little time. As the National Committee explained in 1952:

A new housing area of 7000 to 12000 people presents the Church with a rare opportunity. If the Church is on the spot right away....not only can it be the centre of the life of the new community and play a great part in determining its character, but hundreds of people can be brought back into the fold with one tenth of the effort and difficulty required in the older residential areas. That is what is meant by saying that the Church in the new housing areas has the greatest opportunity given it for decades. But the opportunity is given only for a period. Experience has proved that if the Church does not seize its opportunities in the first five years the task facing it becomes increasingly harder.<sup>29</sup>

But how was the Church to raise the capital funds required for investment in its future? Here, it trusted to traditional Presbyterian culture and governance structures, while making important concessions to the secular temper of the age. Arguably, the result was a more energetic and participative undertaking than its Anglican counterpart. The National Church Extension Committee, drawing on lay and clerical members, operated under the auspices of the Church of Scotland's

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<sup>29</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1952*, (Edinburgh, 1952), 234; *Scotsman*, 2 Feb 1945; 4 Dec 1946.

Home Mission Board, whose work since the early nineteenth century had focussed on reaching social groups and areas beyond the reach of traditional ministry. The financial burden of Church Extension would be borne by the Board, including construction costs for church buildings and their furnishings, and ministers' stipends, with presbyteries responsible for initiating projects and securing suitable sites. When the new congregations gained full parish status they would be expected to repay one fifth of building costs over a ten-year period.<sup>30</sup> As an indication of the importance placed on the scheme, the appeal for the Committee's required one million pounds was an independent fundraising enterprise, standing outside the Church's various other schemes. Fundraising would be centrally driven, with presbyteries assigned targets, which were passed onto the parishes in their area. However, in contrast to Church Extension of the 1930s which relied heavily on a few wealthy donors, its post-war incarnation would also be a much more democratic project, with an appeal made to the whole membership of the Church - numbering around one and a half million - a decision taken in the belief that while wealth redistribution had reduced the number of those able to give very generously, it had empowered ordinary citizens to make a larger contribution.<sup>31</sup> In addition, it was hoped that

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<sup>30</sup> For full organisational details of Church Extension charges see, National Archives of Scotland (NAS), Edinburgh, CH1/13/14, *Church Extension Office Bearer's Handbook* (Revised Edition, 1965).

<sup>31</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1946*, 178.

the emphasis on shared responsibility would energise congregations, deepening their sense of obligation to the Church's broader life and work.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the collective impulse in fundraising, the hallmark of the design process would be individuality. The great majority of the new buildings were 'hall-churches' – permanent dual purpose constructions, designed for worship on Sundays and for use as halls during the rest of the week. Described as, 'the utilitarian products of a period of austerity and restriction', these nevertheless echoed the Scottish tradition of simple communal worship.<sup>33</sup> While the National Church Extension Committee directly employed architects, there was no attempt at standardising design. By 1950, the services of thirty-four different architects had been drawn upon, all of whom were given a very general specification, but expected to exercise their personal skill in its interpretation and execution, making use of the latest building techniques and materials to address budgetary constraints.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Imaginative schemes had already been devised to mobilise women, children and youth: a 'Women's Guild Church' and a 'Children's Church' were planned, while the League of the Lamp encouraged youth to raise funds for lighting installation in new buildings: *Reports to the General Assembly, 1945*, 211-2.

<sup>33</sup> See the National Church Extension Committee's promotional pamphlet, *Scottish Churches in the Post War Period* (Glasgow, nd.), 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1950*, (Edinburgh, 1950), 252.

Yet, despite the insistent pressures driving it and the detailed machinery that had been put in place to deliver its goals, the full dynamism of Church Extension remained constrained during the first decade of its existence. Three years after the end of the war, *The Church in the Midst* was still often housed in a temporary wooden hut.<sup>35</sup> This disappointing situation was the product of a series of challenges, some short-term in nature and related to the immediate post-war context, but others more structural in nature which would persist throughout the lifetime of the programme.

While the concept of 'Christendom' offers a powerful historical framework for understanding the permeation of public life by Christian values before the religious crisis of the 1960s, the experience of Church Extension in Scotland suggests that relationship between the churches and the secular authorities was one which had to be actively managed and negotiated by all parties, especially in conditions of competing priorities and limited national resources.<sup>36</sup> It also indicates the gap between the rhetoric of rapprochement between the Church and the 'new social order' and the practical frustrations of doing business with an exhausted post-war state. Indeed, the first serious problem encountered by promoters of Church Extension was the deceptively simple one of being allowed to build. This required the granting of building licenses, but with housing forming the overwhelming priority for reconstruction throughout Britain it soon became clear these would not be made available for permanent church

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<sup>35</sup> *Life and Work*, Feb 1949.

<sup>36</sup> H. McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007), 6-30.

construction.<sup>37</sup> After the failure of initial negotiations with ministerial departments, it was resolved in that a top-level delegation, led by John White should put the Church's case directly to Joseph Westwood, the Scottish Secretary of State in November 1946.<sup>38</sup> A former miner, raised in the Salvationist tradition, Westwood was acutely aware of the manpower and material shortages which threatened the housing drive, but fully accepted that house-building should make provision for both the material and spiritual needs of the people.<sup>39</sup> The Church of Scotland, as the national church, was therefore instructed to initiate collaboration with the other Scottish Churches in order to draw up a joint programme specifying the irreducible minimum building needs over the next two years. This episode in enforced inter-denominational cooperation was initially productive, but subsequent departmental delays led to unsparing attacks the 1947 General Assembly on the bureaucratic restrictions placed on the Kirk's freedom of action.<sup>40</sup>

Embattled by the surrounding publicity, Westwood granted a limited allowance for permanent construction, permitting the Church's National Committee to apply for building licences up to the value of £300,000. Planning began immediately and in September 1948 the first foundation stone was laid at

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<sup>37</sup> Gibb, 'Policy and processes', 165.

<sup>38</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1950*, (Edinburgh, 1950), 252.

<sup>39</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1947*, (Edinburgh, 1947), 231. For Westwood see, *Glasgow Herald*, 19 Jul. 1948.

<sup>40</sup> *Scotsman*, 22 May 1947; *Glasgow Herald*, 14 Sept 1948.

Provanmill, Glasgow with a further 11 projects on site during the following year.<sup>41</sup> Despite the Committee's satisfaction at seeing 'Christian people with their jackets off', progress was still uncertain, as the severe limitations imposed on church building expenditure continued. In addition, problems of interpretation surrounding the new Town and Country Planning Act (Scotland) imposed further long delays on site acquisition. Nevertheless, another 16 new projects commenced in 1950, although this fell to eight two years later as national steel shortages imposed a further temporary halt on construction.<sup>42</sup>

These regulatory constraints were compounded by financial problems, which multiplied from the late 1940s onwards. The shortage of land, labour and materials meant that the building programme would be much more costly than originally estimated – a hall-church of the early 1950's, for example was now twice as expensive as ten years before.<sup>43</sup> The purchase of manses, at an average cost of £3000 each, had also to be added into the total expenditure, a contingency not contemplated in the original scheme, but one that was deemed essential given the traditional standing of the minister in the community.<sup>44</sup> Mobilising the sustained financial support of congregations was therefore vital, as this component amounted to fifty-seven per cent of the

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<sup>41</sup> *Life and Work*, Oct 1948.

<sup>42</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, Mar 6 1952.

<sup>43</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1954, 235.

<sup>44</sup> From 1944-52 the total expenditure on manses was £113,398: *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1950, 249.

National Committee's total annual income, the balance being formed by grants and legacies and funding from the War Damage Fund.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, after the first two years of the scheme it was becoming clear that not all presbyteries and congregations shared the same zeal for Church Extension as the Church's national leadership. Overall, the response to an urgent and imaginatively presented appeal had been encouraging, even from island and rural congregations, who had little direct contact with the issues involved. However, only one presbytery out of sixty-six had actually met its target, while twelve had failed to reach even fifty per cent.<sup>46</sup> As a result, the impressive total of £735,287 contributed by congregations by the end of the first appeal in 1954 actually meant a deficit of estimated income in the region of £300,000 - enough to build fifteen hall-churches.<sup>47</sup> One difficulty in inspiring congregations had been the lack of visible progress caused by the wrangling over building licenses. This had caused a fall off in donations from 1947 onwards as members assumed that the Church Extension scheme was suspended.<sup>48</sup> However, the National Committee also faced the more fundamental challenge of comfortable and insular parishes which were reticent to commit locally-raised funds to the wider work of the Church.<sup>49</sup> While formal opposition to the principles of Church Extension was not widely voiced within the Church, individual members did voice scepticism over

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<sup>45</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1953*, (Edinburgh, 1953), 240.

<sup>46</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1954*, 242.

<sup>47</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1955*, (Edinburgh, 1955), 259.

<sup>48</sup> *Scotsman*, 15 Sept 1948.

<sup>49</sup> *Scotsman*, 9 Apr 1947; 4 Mar 1948.

the scale of the projected new charges, conjuring up the image of young ministers set down in unfamiliar districts without adequate support.<sup>50</sup> More importantly, others dismissed the very concept of placing a church at the centre of every new community, with the brusque query: 'Does the average churchgoer expect a church at his road-end or is he entitled to it?'<sup>51</sup>

The conservatism of established territorial parishes was indicative of broader institutional forces also impeding rapid growth and renewal. At its simplest the problem was not that more church buildings were needed, but more in the right places. As a historic national church, particularly following its union with the United Free Church in 1929, it had inherited a surfeit of accommodation in older urban areas, much ironically as a result of the denominational rivalry underpinning much of nineteenth-century church building.<sup>52</sup> Amalgamation and closure was now the ideal course to free up resources for new development, but although the National Church Extension Committee linked itself increasingly with the work of the Union of Congregations Committee, individual parishes were still often unwilling to subordinate their loyalty and affection for particular buildings and localities to the needs of the Church at large.<sup>53</sup> While the physical transportation of redundant buildings was considered, this was proved too

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<sup>50</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 Nov 1943.

<sup>51</sup> *Scotsman*, 7 Mar 1944.

<sup>52</sup> The two denominations between them, for example, had built 129 new churches in the decade after 1900: *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1954, 232.

<sup>53</sup> *Life and Work*, Feb. 1954; *Glasgow Herald*, Nov. 6 1950.



expensive to be practical apart from a very few cases.<sup>54</sup> Less weighed down by the heritage of their built environment, it is striking how effectively the smaller Scottish denominations were able to direct their financial resources at key growth points. The Episcopal Church, for example, which had begun its extension planning as early as 1943, targeted the New Towns of East Kilbride, Glenrothes and Cumbernauld, as well as developments in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee, while Baptist Union also took up the challenge of the New Towns, establishing six churches in these areas.<sup>55</sup> Fuelled by ecclesiastical reorganisation and population growth, the Roman Catholic Church made similarly energetic progress: in Glasgow alone it established twenty-six parishes in new housing areas from 1945 onwards, with parallel developments in the neighbouring dioceses of Dumbarton and Motherwell.<sup>56</sup>

Yet, this is not to underestimate what the Church of Scotland did achieve during the first post-war decade. By 1954, despite government restrictions and inflationary pressures, thirty-six new churches had been completed – twenty-six in newly created parishes – while a further fourteen extensions to existing premises were built. In addition, a total of thirty-three new projects were underway or about to begin, with another nineteen buildings commissioned. While the bulk of

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<sup>54</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1946*, 229. For a rare example of transportation see, *Glasgow Evening Citizen*, Sept 6 1952.

<sup>55</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 Nov 1943; 27 Oct 1954.

<sup>56</sup> T.A. Fitzpatrick, *Catholic Secondary Education in South West Scotland. Its contribution to the change in status of the Catholic community of the area* (Aberdeen, 1986), 108-10.

this new building was concentrated in the central belt, expansion had also followed new developments in Perth, Aberdeen and Inverness.<sup>57</sup> Even so, the tempo of house building and population movement was unrelenting. Even if the National Committee were to fulfil its original 1944 target, the ratio of hall-churches to new houses would still only be 1:6000, compared with 1: 4684 in the 1920s.<sup>58</sup> With this in mind, the Committee agreed to press on with its planned construction programme. Overdraft facilities were considered, but it remained convinced that nothing less a new nation-wide appeal to raise a further million pounds over the next five years would truly meet the demands of the situation. Whether more church members would consider this a price worth paying for 'a Church on the Move' was left unresolved.

### **The 'second million': 1955-1960**

Paralleling the second Church Extension appeal, the work of re-housing the Scottish people entered a vigorous new phase from the mid 1950s onwards. The emphasis now shifted towards the comprehensive redevelopment of slum areas and the building of further peripheral housing estates, New Towns and overspill initiatives to house the displaced population.<sup>59</sup> While greater integration of housing and industrial incentives was achieved in the New Towns, elsewhere the

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<sup>57</sup> *Perthshire Advertiser*, 29 Jul. 1950; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 24 Jun 1949, Oct 21 1950; *Inverness Courier*, Mar 9 1959.

<sup>58</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1954, 232.

<sup>59</sup> M.Keating, *The City that Refused to Die* (Aberdeen, 1988), 22-3.

'houses only' policy continued in the hope that general economic uplift would generate a surplus to promote greater amenity provision. The scale of this development remained staggering, with some thirty new estates eventually circling Glasgow alone, each containing around 25-30,000 people.<sup>60</sup>

Despite continued financial anxieties, the Church approached its latest outreach challenge with a renewed appetite. Symbolically, the basic hall-church design was now to be superseded by buildings of 'dignity and distinction', which could, 'more effectively evoke a spirit of worship among the people'.<sup>61</sup> A number of these, like St Columba's, Glenrothes (1961) would reflect the modern design idiom, increasingly abandoning the traditional long-nave type church and attempting new experimental forms, such as polygons and squares to 'gather' the congregation around the pulpit and communion table.<sup>62</sup> In order to raise funds for these projects, the National Committee also experimented with the latest marketing and publicity techniques, including films, promotional literature, a new house magazine, and even a competition to

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<sup>60</sup> F.Worsdall, *The Tenement: A Way of Life* (Edinburgh, 1979), 139-40; Centre for Environmental Studies, *Outer Estates in Britain: Easterhouse Case Study*, CES Paper 24 (1985), i.

<sup>61</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1954*, 254-5.

<sup>62</sup> *New Churches, 1956-62* (Church of Scotland, National Church Extension Committee, nd.

invent a new slogan for the movement, with the prize of an 'Easyclene' washing machine.<sup>63</sup>

This fresh, if febrile, confidence had a number of sources. Following the removal of building controls in 1954, friction with the secular authorities was replaced by recognition and cooperation, with churches regarded as one of the key planning features of the New Towns, after industry, housing and schools.<sup>64</sup> The Church could also be reassured by its own sustained growth in membership, which at its peak in 1956 accounted for nearly thirty-eight per cent of adult Scots.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the fact that membership had increased by 60,000, and Sunday school attendance by 70,000, during a decade of vast population movement and the disruption of community life seemed to underline the value and necessity of Church Extension work.<sup>66</sup>

Further motivation for accelerating the building programme came from the Church Extension congregations themselves, whose achievements were

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<sup>63</sup> The winning slogan was, 'Every New Steeple, Means More Christian People': *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1957), 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Reports of the Cumbernauld, East Kilbride and Glenrothes Development Corporations for the year ended March 1958* (Edinburgh, 1960), Report of the Home Board, 263. See also F. Schaffer, *The New Town Story* (London, 1970), 156.

<sup>65</sup> Hight, *Scottish Churches*, 23.

<sup>66</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1958*, (Edinburgh, 1958), 318.

widely covered in the local and national press.<sup>67</sup> Mirroring the church-going surge which was sweeping Europe and North America, these fast-growing new parishes were not only rallying existing church members, but also attracting new adherents - particularly among children and young people. In 1957, for example, it was estimated that in all Church Extension parishes, there were 41,000 children and 4000 leaders in Sunday Schools; 600 youth in Bible Class and 266 leaders; 22,700 in uniformed organisations; and 2,100 in clubs and fellowships.<sup>68</sup> Regular worship attendance, as recalled by the ministers in Wood's survey, often exceeded sixty per cent of the church role, with peak attendance of 400-800 quite common: in some cases multiple Sunday services were required to accommodate all those wishing to attend.<sup>69</sup> Typical was the comment from a new Ayrshire congregation, three quarters of whom were recent communicants: 'The Church is recovering what had been lost'.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For examples of extensive local coverage see: *Ayr Advertiser*, Jul 8 1955 (Drongan); 4 Sept 1958 (Castlehill); *Edinburgh Evening Despatch*, 26 Sept 1958 (Broomhill); *Glasgow Evening Citizen*, 4 Oct 1952 (Priesthill). Note also, 'Church Extension' supplement: *Glasgow Herald*, 5 Oct 1957.

<sup>68</sup> *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 3; See also, *Reports to the General Assembly, 1958*, (Edinburgh, 1958), Report of the Home Board, p.318.

<sup>69</sup> For examples in Drumchapel, Glasgow and Castlehill, Ayr see *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1956), p. 5; vol. 2, no. 4 (1958), 10.

<sup>70</sup> *Life and Work*, Dec. 1953.

Besides boosting membership statistics, these young congregations - with their overwhelmingly working-class profile - were also seen as refreshing the shared life of the Church. From the beginning they had dispensed with exclusive practices, such as traditional seat rents, and experimented with more participative forms of worship. It was seen as no coincidence that some of the most significant attempts at evangelisation: local visitation campaigns, house churches, 'Tell Scotland' groups, and the ministry to the sick, had all originated or been reshaped by Church Extension activity. In the view of the National Committee, it was as if the Church had been brought back to the basics of its mission:

Without buildings or substance or tradition, the Church has had to start again with nothing to offer men and women but the Gospel, and in the open-air, in crowded living rooms, in school classrooms, in contractor's huts and in all kinds of 'secular' surroundings, the Gospel has been declared with a new simplicity and directness.<sup>71</sup>

Free of inherited burdens, Church Extension parishes did indeed enjoy 'the advantages of backwardness', which Cox identifies as important for the growth of new Christian congregations in the early twenty-first century.<sup>72</sup> As the Rev David Macleod described his parish in the massive Glasgow housing estate of Castlemilk:

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<sup>71</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1957*, (Edinburgh, 1957), 269.

<sup>72</sup> J.Cox, 'Towards eliminating the concept of secularisation: a progress report', in Brown and Snape (eds), *Secularisation*, 21.

The field was very virgin and extensive... only 500 acres, but housing a density of 400 souls to the acre. And the field was very fertile – aided by the powerful shock to entrenched habit that every one of those transported souls would experience. It's like catching a boxer with one foot on the canvas...<sup>73</sup>

Indeed, in absence of established social networks and alternative amenities in often barren new environments, churches were able to operate as a familiar reference point, providing opportunities for companionship and recreation. In Shortlees, for example, a large local authority estate build south of Kilmarnock in the 1940s: 'The promised land, for which we had longed, turned out to be a kind of Siberia – no shops, no cinema, not homes, no school'.<sup>74</sup> Here the new minister on his bicycle became a one-man advice agency, gathering a congregation in advance of a church building. The use of church premises for welfare purposes would remain a prominent feature in many parishes, such as Glenrothes (St Mary's), where the church hall variously hosted a mobile X-ray unit; a probation officer; chiropody services; as well as child psychiatrists and social workers.<sup>75</sup> In other cases, such as East Kilbride New Town, where there was a 'distinct social cleavage' between the original villagers and the new settlers,

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<sup>73</sup> *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1958), 10-11.

<sup>74</sup> *Life and Work*, Nov. 1949.

<sup>75</sup> *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1960, 6.

the Church took credit for being the only unifying agency capable of grafting together a viable new community out of these disparate elements.<sup>76</sup>

The celebration of success of this type was vital to maintaining the momentum of Church Extension. However, towards the end of the 1950s - just as the post-war religious boom had itself reached its peak - it is possible to detect a sudden change of mood. With an average of eleven new church projects completed each year between 1955 and 1960, the strains of rapid growth were beginning to tell. Like the general religious crisis which was shortly to follow, there was no single explanatory factor behind the growing sense of doubt that would come to colour the movement. Church Extension had always been prey to a volatile post-war economic climate, but now some of its internal challenges began increasingly to interact with broader patterns of social and cultural change, particularly associated with rising living standards.<sup>77</sup> The new defensiveness was signalled in a series of articles in the Church's house journal, *Life and Work* in February 1958, which raised the spectre of sustainability and retention in Church Extension charges.<sup>78</sup> Although these were some of the Church's most vibrant parishes, it was becoming apparent that peak growth was reached after a five to seven year period, after which there was a danger of an outflow of members and a deceleration of church life. One minister commented that he had lost 1200 young people in five years, individuals who had joined and

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<sup>76</sup> *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 1, no. 2, (1956), 5.

<sup>77</sup> McLeod, *Religious Crisis*, 15.

<sup>78</sup> *Life and Work*, Feb 1958.



then dropped out again, in the face of limited accommodation and a lack of youth leaders; for another colleague, the challenge came from the 'congregationalism' of established parishes which prevented them from supporting their new neighbours with personnel.<sup>79</sup> The sense of growing 'burn out' extended to the ministers themselves, who felt forced to balance multiple new tasks with family relationships.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, Church Extension charges were seen as one of the most challenging in the Church and the lack of manpower to staff them adequately had been a concern from the early days of the movement. The difficulty partly reflected a growing shortage of candidates the ministry by the 1950s, but was also the product of the Church's territorial stretch.<sup>81</sup> This meant that Church Extension charges were forced to compete with smaller parochial areas with more lucrative stipends in order to attract and hold the ablest men. In these circumstances, the team ministry paradigm, deemed essential as early as 1946, and which would become the norm in American parishes of a similar scale, was never a realistic possibility.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Life and Work*, May 1958.

<sup>80</sup> Wood, 'Leadership profiles', 114; W. Coffey, *God's Conman: the Life and Work of the Reverend James Currie* (Argyll, 1988), 94-127.

<sup>81</sup> Allen, *Face of My Parish*, 102-3. While there were 322 students in the Church of Scotland divinity colleges in 1937-8, this had fallen to 210 in 1947-8, even with the post-war influx of candidates. By 1952-3 only 37 students had entered the 4 colleges.

<sup>82</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1946*, 180.

Yet beneath these practical difficulties lay a deeper unease over whether the institutional Church was actually equipped culturally and organisationally to face the implications of the extension of its boundaries. In terms unthinkable a decade before, the *Life and Work* agonised:

There are no doubt greater opportunities of creating a real Christian community in the Church because people are ready for new beginnings. They are not tied to convention. But that is only a beginning. Do we know what we are building up? Do we have a pattern of what the Church is intended to be in this new age? Some of our Church Extension charges suggest, by their later problems, that we do not see the shape of the Church to come.<sup>83</sup>

The chronic problems of fundraising which beset Church Extension from the outset of its second appeal suggested that these fears were not without substance. With expenditure on new buildings averaging £28,000 a month for the first eight months of 1955, income from congregations averaged only £2,400, with 120 refusing to make any contribution.<sup>84</sup> Against the background of rising costs, the persistent shortfall in congregational donations left the work of the movement dangerously exposed, and by October 1957, the gross debit balance in the Church Extension Account had climbed to a staggering £440,000.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Life and Work*, Feb 1958.

<sup>84</sup> *Life and Work*, Oct 1955; *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1956), 5.

<sup>85</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1958*, (Edinburgh, 1958), 325-6.

Various expedients were explored, including an appeal to wealthy lay members of the type that had been rejected during the 'First Million' drive, but there remained little alternative but to limit the building programme for the next two years in a desperate attempt to control expenditure. This would particularly hamper work in New Towns such as Cumbernauld, where continued population growth was projected for the next decade.<sup>86</sup>

The Church's embarrassment in this instance may have reflected a failure of imagination on the part of the congregational mainstream, but it also seemed to connect with deeper concerns among its membership over the 'new intake' from the housing schemes. Some in established congregations, for example, remained highly sceptical of the need for spending over £30,000 on churches in the new housing areas, when 'after all, it is not the beautiful expensive church that we worship'.<sup>87</sup> In these circumstances, the National Church Extension Committee felt it increasingly necessary to emphasise that Extension parishes were undertaking to repay their own share of building costs, with £150,000 already received by 1956.<sup>88</sup> Attempts to experiment with more democratic and non-traditional forms of worship also seemed to mark out the 'otherness' of the new charges, although for some former enthusiasts like Tom Allen, it was their

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<sup>86</sup> *Life and Work*, Aug. 1957; *Reports to the General Assembly, 1961*, (Edinburgh, 1961), 282. For the 'Laymen's Appeal' see, NAS, CH1/13/14: *National Church Extension Appeal to Industry and Commerce for £500,000*.

<sup>87</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 14 Jan 1956.

<sup>88</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1957*, (Edinburgh, 1957), 277.

readiness to provide social and recreational facilities, which now threatened to undermine the Church's primary role as a spiritual agency: 'If people want to play badminton there are other places where they can do so – probably in much better conditions'.<sup>89</sup> It was Allen who had originally written of many new comers simply 'chilled out' of the church by the attitude of existing members, but the problem of assimilation he had predicted for individual congregations was apparently now being reflected in the Church's national framework. His diagnosis of the problem remained relevant: the mainstream church had become an enclosed community, characterised by middle-class values and activities that divorced it from the experience of the mass of the people. In fact, the struggle to bring Church Extension parishioners into the full life of the Church also reflected the continuing power of the discourse of working-class irreligion. Even in the 1950s, housing estates like Pollok, Glasgow were seen as areas as 'pioneering' or 'frontier work' for the Church, where 'auxiliary corps' would dash in to help understaffed Sunday schools.<sup>90</sup> A particularly high premium was placed the role the minister in these charges, as it was assumed the laity would lack the confidence and experience to assume leadership roles.<sup>91</sup> Faced with a people, 'prone to be swept away into the pursuit of a "good time"', the challenge remained as it had been for the previous generation of churchmen:

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<sup>89</sup> Hignet, *Scottish Churches*, 134, 136.

<sup>90</sup> *Life and Work*, Apr. 1955; *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1956).

<sup>91</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1959*, (Edinburgh, 1959), 263; Hignet, *Scottish Churches*, 135.

'Men and women have to be won – and kept from slipping back'.<sup>92</sup> The familiar discourse now acquired an additional dimension: that the concentration of the working-class population in large estates could threaten social stability in the event of any future economic downturn. As Very Rev Charles War explained:

...it is a question of whether the people, and especially their children, are to have the chance of growing up amidst the Christian influences which only the Church can provide, or growing up an easy prey to those sinister influences which here at home and throughout the world are threatening everything which Christianity and democracy hold dear.<sup>93</sup>

With Church Extension scheduled to be subsumed into the Church's mainstream fundraising activity as the 'Second Million' appeal drew to a close in 1961, drastic action was necessary to wipe out its massive debt. Spearheaded by the charismatic George MacLeod, as the new Convenor of the National Church Extension Committee, 'Operation Last Lap' in 1960 was a typically imaginative scheme which bypassed congregational structures in order to appeal directly to individual members through the distribution of some 600,000 collecting cards.<sup>94</sup> This short, one-off mobilisation exercise - coinciding with the four-hundredth anniversary of the Scottish Reformation - proved more effective than previous schemes, with congregational contributions making their target for the first time

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<sup>92</sup> *Life and Work*, Feb 1958.

<sup>93</sup> *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1956), 7.

<sup>94</sup> *Life and Work*, Mar; Jun. 1960; *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1961, 285-6.

since 1955. However, rather than any sustained new financial commitment from the Church's membership, it was ultimately the retrenchment of the building programme over the previous three years which contributed to the timely liquidation of the National Committee's debit balance.<sup>95</sup>

There is, of course, a further poignancy to 'Operation Last Lap': the Church Extension movement was now approaching the end of its post-war labours at the very point when the Church's membership was poised to enter a sharp downward trajectory. By the early 1960s, the task of 'winning the lost two million outside the Kirk' would seem impossible amid an industrial Scotland characterised by 'drab, ill-kept surroundings, deteriorating premises, dwindling memberships and disheartened disillusioned ministers'.<sup>96</sup> Work remained for Church Extension, as the new areas were still judged as very 'underchurched', with many parishes of 10,000 and even 20,000 cared for by a single charge: a number of significant new projects were completed, but with costs rising and financial support declining even further under the new coordinated funding arrangements, a further freeze in building was announced in 1967.<sup>97</sup> By the end of the decade, even the movement's basic rationale had begun to be

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<sup>95</sup> Compared with £227,580 raised under Operation Last Lap, the first year of the new Coordinated Appeal in 1961 raised only £108,170: *Reports to the General Assembly, 1966*, (Edinburgh, 1966), 367-6.

<sup>96</sup> *Life and Work*, Mar 1964.

<sup>97</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1961*, 281; *Church Extension Chimes*, no. 9, 1965; no. 15, 1968/9.

questioned within an increasingly troubled and divided Church. Influenced by the fashionable theology of 'religionless Christianity', with its rejection of the conventional trappings of religious observance, an anxious Budget and Stewardship Committee pondered whether, 'the emphasis on physical fabric which has been traditional in Western Christendom may be a burden rather than an aid, in fulfilling the missionary task of the congregation'.<sup>98</sup>

Besides its intrinsic difficulties, it had become transparent that the ultimate fate of Church Extension was also now dependent on drivers rooted in wider Scottish society. McLeod has pointed to importance of affluence as a key force for religious change as it affected so many other aspects of people's lives, focusing personal identity around the home and nuclear family, boosting spending power, and encouraging new forms of individual expression.<sup>99</sup> In the Scottish case, the real earnings of working people increased from the late 1950s, while unemployment fell to historically low levels.<sup>100</sup> Rising living standards were reflected in an increased consumerism with which the Church was never completely at ease, not least as expanded leisure opportunities tended to undermine the near-monopoly of provision that the Church had enjoyed in some of the new housing areas.<sup>101</sup> Above all, it was the rapid defection of young people, once the backbone of the new charges, which from the early 1960s

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<sup>98</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1968*, (Edinburgh, 1968), 410.

<sup>99</sup> McLeod, *Religious Crisis*, 14-15.

<sup>100</sup> T. Begg, *Housing Policy in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996), 132.

<sup>101</sup> *Life and Work*, Apr 1963; Jan 1964.

onwards became the greatest source of perplexity, as congregations experimented with new religious music and 'Sunday cafes'.<sup>102</sup> In this context, ministers, particularly in the maturing New Towns, pondered the challenge of how to 'DEMONSTRATE THAT GOD CAN BE FOUND IN THE MIDST OF PLENTY', concluding that the church must teach that man's spirit could not be healed by simply ministering to his body.<sup>103</sup>

Rising affluence had a final, more direct impact on Church Extension, as the unfolding residential dynamics of the peripheral estates also began to threaten the 'new communities' that the Church had tried to mould. As the post-war economic boom matured, the sociological profile of these settlements began to change. By 1960s housing densities on schemes were forty per cent higher than those recommended in 1940s, but employment opportunities had not materialised.<sup>104</sup> Since municipally-owned rented housing was the overwhelming type available - often of the most basic quality - the young, skilled, upwardly mobile families among the original settlers began to move out either into owner-occupied suburban developments, which multiplied during the 1960s, or into the New Towns, where more mixed residential development had been accompanied by expanding employment opportunities.<sup>105</sup> This new voluntary migration, coterminous with the rapid redistribution of former inner-city dwellers,

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<sup>102</sup> *Life and Work*, Feb 1961; Sept 1964; Brown, *Religion and Society*, 166-7.

<sup>103</sup> *Church Extension Challenge*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1960, 3-6.

<sup>104</sup> Keating, *City*, 24.

<sup>105</sup> Gibb, 'Policy and processes', 165.



especially after 1957, heightened the social stratification and segregation of housing schemes, which now drew disproportionately on the unskilled, single parents and the aging. In some cases the denominational balance of estates may also have shifted – a third of ministers in Wood’s survey, for example, were keenly aware of the development a greater local Roman Catholic presence.<sup>106</sup> For those Church members who remained behind, religious worship, as Gibb suggests, remained one of the few areas of provision that remained outside the all-encompassing grasp of the local authority.<sup>107</sup>

To conclude, while there is a tendency to explain the religious upswing of the 1940s and 50s as a reaction to the trauma of war and a consequent hunger for stability, Church Extension offers a reminder of how the Church’s own strategies and experiments interacted with this generalised cultural climate. The efforts of the post-war ‘generation of hope’ to rebuild the nation spanned both the secular and the spiritual. While the planners relied on the machinery of the state, the Church trusted to a massive voluntary effort. Yet, both were united by a sense of ‘heroic’ endeavour. Indeed, in this sense the early phase of the Church Extension movement in Scotland has more apparent points of connection with North American dynamism than with the more modest activities of the Anglican establishment. Nevertheless, this expansionary wave contained its own fault-lines. Despite its periodic alarm over working-class backsliding, a key characteristic of the movement remained its confidence in the essentially

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<sup>106</sup> Wood, ‘Leadership profiles’, 27; Fitzpatrick, *Catholic Secondary Education*, 110.

<sup>107</sup> Gibb, ‘Policy and processes’, 167.

Christian character of post-war Scotland. This left little space for systematic evaluation of whether Scots would actually continue to seek an active church connection and whether the strong statistical indicators of adherence of the 1940s and early 1950s could be sustained in the longer term. In this way, it is striking that, although the National Committee conscientiously mapped new house-building projections and estimates of 'church-housing density', its massive investment in new church buildings was made in the face of untested demand. The reflections of the 1963 Scottish Office *Housing Density Report* on the construction high-volume housing and peripheral estates might also perhaps have been applied to Church Extension: '...there would appear to have been no pause to consider whether or not the actual requirements of the population were really being met; there would appear to have been no consideration as to whether this kind of investment would stand the test of time'.<sup>108</sup>

For its supporters, the great value of the movement was: 'what it tells the Church about itself'.<sup>109</sup> Some of this was undoubtedly positive. Faced with a major threat to its role in urban community life, the Church was determined to fight back. This impulse to extend the Church's territorial structure was powered by its sense of duty as a national church – all the more so as the concentrated pattern of public housing in Scotland presented a direct opportunity to exorcise the demon of working class alienation. Yet, hopes that Church Extension would

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<sup>108</sup> T. Markus, 'Comprehensive development and housing, 1945-75', in P. Reid (ed.), *Glasgow. The Forming of the City* (Edinburgh, 1993), 161.

<sup>109</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly, 1955*, (Edinburgh, 1955), 261.

also embody 'missionary expansionism' and church renewal were challenged by the settled assumptions of congregational life and the material and psychological inheritance of its national parish network. For all the energy and imagination of Church Extension, the Church of Scotland was not at heart a missionary church with the boundless capacity to recreate itself, but instead drew its main strength from its 'adjectival' role as a pillar of Scottish civil society.<sup>110</sup> This had been the wellspring of its historic identity, but when the rising generation of the 1960s began to question established beliefs and practices, it was hardly surprising that a traditional institution so entwined with the accustomed order would become immediately vulnerable.

Not surprisingly it was the buildings created by Church Extension rather than any enduring spiritual transformation that became its legacy. Some of these were imaginative examples of the latest European Protestant design, but most were of less architectural merit - although they did at least break the monotony of the new built environment. There was a final irony. In keeping with the spirit of the age, Church Extension churches were built quickly and cheaply to meet pressing needs. It was almost inevitable that within one or two decades, like much of the housing around them, they would come to display flaws in design and construction. As membership and attendance entered a steep decent from the 1960s onwards, over-capacity imposed increasing financial pressures on the modern Church. In this cold climate, many of the 'citadels of faith' which had once symbolised the aims and ambitions of Church Extension would

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<sup>110</sup> Allen, *Face of My Parish*, 39.

become surplus to requirements, put on the market as 'sites suitable for development'.<sup>111</sup>

**Total word count (including footnotes): 10160**

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<sup>111</sup> See, for example, *Glasgow Herald*, Oct. 22, 2009 for the sale of Castlemilk West Church - the 'virgin field' identified by Rev Macleod in 1958.